

Smoking Cessation Program

North Carolina, along with six other states, was selected to participate in a new smoking cessation program that will be directed to consumers of substance abuse and mental health services.

“Populations affected by substance abuse and mental health issues disproportionately use tobacco,” says Jim Jarrard, acting director of the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS). “In our state, just fewer than 20% of the general population smokes, but 49% of mental health consumers and 63% of people with substance abuse issues are smokers.”

To address this disparity, the NC Leadership Academy for Wellness and Smoking Cessation was developed in partnership with the federal government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center at the University of California San Francisco. The Leadership Academy first met in 2011 to set goals and create a baseline for their smoking cessation efforts. The initial meeting also developed multiple strategies and evaluation options for the plan.

Over 35 stakeholders participated in the initial Leadership Academy in August 2011. At the end of the meeting, the participants had developed a 5 year strategy to address this issue and had set target goals to achieve by the year 2016.

The group set goals to reduce the smoking rate among the substance abuse population from 63% to 50%. The goal for the mental health population was a reduction in the smoking rate from 49% to 39% and in the general population from 19.8% to 16%, all by the year 2016.

The Leadership Academy also developed strategies and a timeline to work toward these goals. Some of the strategies include raising awareness about the disparity in smoking rates, providing training to substance abuse and mental health providers that will better equip them to address the issue of smoking with their clients, providing referrals and utilizing QuitlineNC.

QuitlineNC offers free resources for any North Carolina resident wanting to quit using tobacco. Quitline NC also offers resources to health professionals, employers, friends and relatives wanting to support someone trying to quit smoking.

QuitlineNC can be reached online at www.quitlinenc.com or by telephone at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). Quit coaching is available in English and Spanish with translation services for other languages available.

“Smoking tobacco causes more deaths among clients in substance abuse treatment than the alcohol or drugs that brought them to treatment,” says Margaret Brake, program manager with DMH/DD/SAS. “By working together we can have a huge impact on this problem with these populations.”

Additional information about the NC Leadership Academy for Wellness and Smoking Cessation can be found online at (insert URL).

Additional information on quitting smoking is available at
www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov/cessation/index.htm.